

Effect of Political Advertising on Voters' Choice of Candidate: Emphasis on the 2015 Governorship Election in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study assessed the effect of political advertising on voters' choice of candidate during the 2015 Governorship Election in Imo State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the tense political atmosphere that pervaded the political landscape in the state prior to the gubernatorial election due to the incumbent governor's defection to an opposition party and the resolve of other candidates in that election to take over the reins of power from the incumbent governor. To solicit votes or win the support of the electorate, candidates used political advertising among other strategies to sell their personality and party manifestoes. Political advertising of two notable candidates in that election (Rochas Okorocha of the All Progressives Congress, and Emeka Ihedioha of the Peoples Democratic Party) were studied. Key results showed that: there was significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate; voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber election in Imo State was significantly influenced by unique selling propositions of candidates' political advertising. Voters' informed voting decision was significantly attributed to different message delivery patterns used. Also, the difference in message content of some of political advertising and the way they were relayed in different advertising media did not significantly affect voters' choice of candidate in that election, meanwhile voters' choice of candidate for an election significantly changed when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising message. Based on these results, the study recommends that voters should always evaluate the content of candidates' political advertisements and match the results with the observable character of candidates to ascertain if a candidate's personality profile and party programmes fit into their choice criteria. Political marketing practitioners should see political advertising as a potent tool for candidate marketing and a vehicle to drive behaviour and attitude change.

Keywords: Political Advertising, Voters' Choice, Candidate, Political Marketing, Unique Selling Proposition

1.Introduction

The nomination and election of candidates into various political offices are important in party politics and representative democracy. In every political party, such nominations are made at national and state conventions preceding the presidential, gubernatorial, and other local elections (Achor and Moguluwa, 2012). Prior to the 2015 general elections in Nigeria and indeed Imo State, political parties through keenly contested or 'stage-managed' primaries produced candidates who vied for various political offices. Securing a party's candidature is a hurdle that must be passed using intra-party connections, personal contacts, and aspirant's credentials or achievements. After securing a party's candidacy, the candidate and the political party have an uphill task to winning during general elections (Achor, 2011). Irrespective of the level of political campaign, the electorate (voters) is the target. They buy the political product if the product meets their needs; they are also the recipients of political messages that solicit their support or vote. The voters may vary in their expectations which could range from a desire for total change from 'politics as usual', vibrant and visionary political leadership, to detribalized leader with holistic electorate-focused programmes (Achor, Nwachukwu and Udensi, 2016).

As targets in political campaign (i.e. electioneering and voter mobilization campaigns), the voters are influenced through various political marketing strategies and programmes. The array of political marketing strategies provides information which voters need to assess candidate's capability in satisfying their needs. The contents of the campaign blue-print are the expressions of candidate's objectives for seeking votes from the electorate (Owuamalam, 2014). Prior to the 2015 gubernatorial election in Imo state, the two prominent gubernatorial candidates (Owelle Rochas Okorocha and Emeka Ihedioha) massively employed political marketing strategies. These were employed to woo voters or persuade them to vote candidate of their choice or political party. One prominent strategy adopted by the two guber-candidates was political advertising, which is a kind of advertising specifically directed to the electorate to persuade them to vote for or against a candidate. Political advertising was massively employed since there is no known cutting edge strategy that can win all the time, given the political terrain in Nigeria and particularly in Imo State where competition is stiff.

It can be recalled that the political atmosphere in Imo State prior to the general elections was tense as a

result of the incumbent governor's defection to All Progressives Congress (APC), the then opposition party in Nigeria. The polity was unduly heated while the electorate was divided due to issues and negative propaganda strategies that were used by both the opposition and incumbent political party to sway public opinion to their favour. To be able to holistically influence voters, different forms of political advertising which anchored on different unique selling propositions (USPs) were used. The implication is that political messages must be anchored around a specific issue, which explains why a candidate should be preferred to others in an election (Owuamalam, 2014). Although scholars and practitioners alike agree that political advertising is important for every election campaign, there seems to be no agreement on the effects of political advertising on electoral outcomes or choice of candidate for election. Based on the above issues raised or scenarios, this study aimed at empirically studying the effects of various political advertising strategies used by two notable gubernatorial candidates (Rochas Okorocha and Emeka Ihedioha) in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State on voters.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The past two decades witnessed increased use of political advertising in Nigeria as a tool for mobilizing electorate's support for elections (Achor and Moguluwa, 2012). Prior to and during 2015 governorship election in Imo State, as in other parts of Nigeria, political parties employed advertising to sell their parties' manifestoes and candidates. Given the heated political atmosphere that pervaded Imo State prior to the elections, it was not quite clear whether the crafted political advertising messages significantly influenced the voting public.

All political advertising must have a message capable of influencing attitude, behavior and opinion (Nwosu and Nkamnebe, 2006). However, it was also not clear whether voters' choice of candidate during the gubernatorial election were informed by the unique selling propositions used in the political advertising campaigns. More so, it is not evidently clear whether the majority of voters who voted during 2015 election in Imo State made informed voting decisions or choices as a result of their exposure to political advertising messages. In political communication, the credibility of the source and medium used impact on the message believability. Voters too were faced with the dilemma of either accepting or rejecting the message based on the above fact. During the electioneering campaign, the guber candidates used different media in delivering their message and some of the media used had a different confusing message which is not really clear if they had any impact on voter choice of candidate on the Election Day.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to assess the effects of political advertising on voters' choice of candidate in the last 2015 general elections in Imo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

- i. Ascertain the extent voters' exposure to political advertising messages affected their choice of candidate.
- ii. Determine the extent voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber election was influenced by unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising campaign.
- iii. Examine if voters' informed voting decisions were attributed to different styles by which political advertising messages were presented/disseminated.
- iv. Determine the extent the difference in message content of some political advertising relayed in different advertising media affected voters' choice of candidate in an election.
- v. Ascertain the extent voters' choice of candidate for an election change when presented with more believable facts by opponents' advertising messages.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. To what extent does voters' exposure to political advertising message relates to their choice of candidate?
- ii. Can voters' choice of candidate in an election influenced by unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising campaign?
- iii. To what extent can voters' informed voting decision be attributed to different styles by which political advertising message were presented?
- iv. Does the difference in message content of some political advertising as relayed in different media affect voters' choice of candidate in an election?
- v. To what extent can voters' choice of candidate for an election change when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising message?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null-hypotheses are formulated for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate.

2. Voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State was not significantly influenced by unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising campaign.
3. Voters' informed voting decision is not significantly attributed to different message delivery patterns of political advertising.
4. The difference in message content of some political advertising and the way they are relayed in different advertising media does not significantly affect voters' choice of candidate in an election.
5. Voters' choice of candidate for an election does not significantly change when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising messages.

1.5 Scope

The study used the opinions of eligible and registered voters in the last general elections regarding the impact of political advertising in their choice of guber candidate. For objectivity, this was balanced with the views of scholars in political marketing

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Discussions on political advertising is domiciled in the mainstream political marketing politics literature, which is a branch of social marketing (Achor, 2002; Achor, Nwachukwu and Nkwocha, 2015). The domain of political advertising is eclectic and draws extensively from different disciplines such as political science, management, communication, marketing, public relations, and orthodox advertising, etc(Achor and Moguluwa, 2012; Anyanwu,2012). The common denominator of all the knowledge drawn from these disciplines anchor on the premise that political advertising influences attitude, behavior and acts as a tool for mobilization of the electorate to participate in politics or political processes, for example supporting or voting a particular political candidate during elections. The diagram (Figure1) below captures the idea expressed above as it depicts a conceptual framework/model of political advertising and voter choice interface. The diagram depicts that the purpose of political advertising is not only to influence attitude or change behavior of a subject or object towards a candidate or political party, but a potent tool to market a policy and even a government. The political advertiser (e.g. political candidate, political party, etc), engages professional political communicators that craft the messages in line with the objective of influencing behavior and attitude or winning voter support. Political advertisements are disseminated via different mainstream advertising media and social media platforms. The received message falls within one of the three voter cognitive compartments: latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection and latitude of non commitment. The message received in any of the compartment is meant to either influence voter choice of candidate depending on the already held belief, attitude or behavior of an individual voter. A voter's evaluation of political message can reinforce his/her already held belief towards "candidate A" or entirely influences it. As such, if the evaluation supports its views in the latitude of acceptance, the voter votes or supports a particular candidate. The reverse is the case if the message reinforces the voter's view s of being apolitical and this falls within the voter's latitude of rejection. However, when the message which falls on the latitude of non commitment does not relate to any acceptable views or held belief of the voter, the voter declines voting or withdraws its support for a candidate. This particular scenario calls for deepened approach that could sell leadership qualities of a candidate or his views on contentious national and local issues as well as approaches that de-market alleged negative character of a political candidate, which inhibits voters' choice. As the curtain is drawn, the message of this diagrammatical conceptual framework of political advertising and voter choice interface is that behavior change, influence and adoption of the right attitude/character are the core, and the bottom-line of political advertising. Above all the political advertising must be seen as voter or electorate-focused/driven, and at the same time offering and securing approval of ideas of value with the voter.

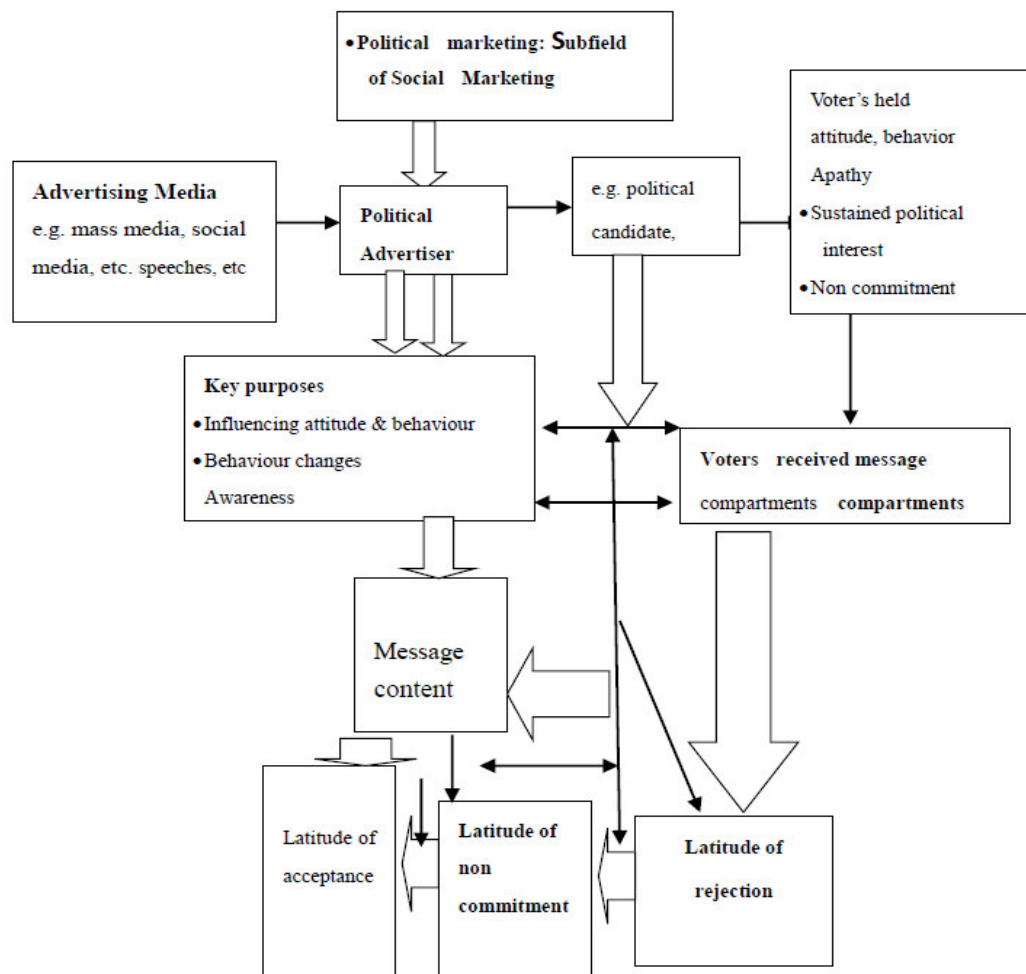


Figure I: Conceptual Framework of Political Advertising and Voter choice Interface

Source: Researchers' conceptualization from reviewed literature

2.1.2 Concept of political advertising

Political advertising, takes its roots and/or draws from the orthodox advertising, which is any communication paid for, directed at a target audience, through the various mass media with the main aim of creating awareness about goods and services and also selling a candidate. From the brief introduction it is right to say that political advertising is a tributary of the orthodox advertising. Political advertising could be seen as an aspect of marketing politics just like orthodox advertising is an aspect of orthodox marketing, promotional or marketing communications tool (Nwosu, 2003; Nwosu and Nkamnebe, 2006). Robbs (2009) gives a narrow conceptualization of political advertising by limiting it only to "the use of media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public". Ansolabere and Iyenga (1995) share similar view with Robbs. They say that political advertising has become a veritable tool for selling candidates of political parties during election campaigns". Samila (2003) gives credence to the preceding views by describing advertising and public relations as taken the centre stage of promotion of political candidates and parties vying for different political positions during campaigns".

Other scholars have described political advertising based on nomenclature of the message content. Anchoring on this notion, political advertising refers to messages whose content is political and presented to influence voters' behavior through its perceived persuasive impact (Owuamalam, 2014). Expanding this view, Owuamalam (2014) asserts that "It harasses the guards of the electorate as it seeks endorsement from voters at election periods, like the proposed March 28, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria". It is the proposal contained in each candidate's advertisement that separates them as competitors, within the same political constituency. The offer represents bait which dangles speculations as realities within the ambit of issue management for mind persuasion, through the provided information. "The message is paid for as communication, targeted at voter consideration for choosing a candidate at the election". A cursory analysis of the various descriptions of the concept of political advertising limits it to a form of advertising used to persuade the electorate to vote for a candidate of their choice during elections. To the authors of this article, political advertising is a broad concept that operates beyond canvassing votes for a political candidate or selling a candidate to the prospective voters,

but extends to employing various forms of advertising techniques and strategies to market government policies, programmes or drums support for governments decisions that impact the entire citizenry. It has been widely used to mobilize support for a particular government and also to effect attitudinal and behavioural changes amongst communities of people who are apathetic about government genuine concern for community development etc. (Achor 2002; Achor and Okoye, 2015) Achor and Moguluwa 2012).

For the purpose of this study, it is proper to align the various descriptions of political advertising with that form of advertising that creates awareness for a political candidate and the same time canvasses support of the voters during electioneering campaigns or elections. The advertising message is crafted in such a way that the recipients are moved to action as they access and assess the information provided before making informed voting decision regarding the candidate to vote for in any election. The message so crafted should persuade the recipients towards political participation. What is expressed in this paragraph aligns with the conceptual framework of political advertising and voter choice interface earlier documented.

2.1.3 Taxonomy of Political of Advertising.

Political advertising has been classified in different categories. Udeze and Akpan (2003), Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan(2011) classified it into three categories namely political (advert) advertisement; contrasts (advert) advertisement, and negative or attack advertisement. According to Johnston and Kaid (2002) political advertising can be classified into two: image advert (advertisement) and issue advert or advertisement. For proper understanding of typologies of political advertising as it relates to the study, political advertising can be categorized according to the purpose for which the advertising campaign is intending to achieve. Within the broad purpose classification we have the following typology of political advertising:

i. Attack Ads/Negative Campaigning Advertisement. Attack advertising or knocking copy or attack copy is a variant of positive and image/credibility building advertising. Attack adverts are meant to attack opponent of a candidate in other to smear his/her image (Achor and Moguluwa 2012; Achor, Nwachukwu and Udensi, 2016). Negative advert contains only negative statements about the opponent and nothing positive about the candidate (Goldsten and Freedman 2002; Lau and Sigelman 2000; Opelbi 2006; Olujide et al 2011; Udeze and Akpan, 2014). An attack ad is advertisements (true or untrue) meant to attack another candidate or political party, and is often part of negative or smear campaigning. This typology of political advertisement featured prominently in the US election period of the 1960, 2000s (Newman, 2001)

In Nigerian political terrain, politicians and political candidates deploy negative ad campaign in various forms. As documented by Achor and Moguluwa (2012), prior to 1999 presidential election the two prominent presidential candidates, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and Chief Olu Felea of the All Nigerians Peoples Party (ANPP) deployed the arsenal of negative advertising. This trend continued through 2003 and 2007 general elections and 2011-2014 elections, as political parties and their candidates attack the opposition parties or opponents in the elections.

This negative campaigning or attack Ads were visibly deployed by Governor Okorocha and chief Ihedioha electioneering campaign advertisement. In one of the Ihedioha's advert, he accused the incumbent governor of running of a government of "familocracy" (i.e. a government for the governor, his family members, friends and cronies). The adverts were meant to persuade Imo people to vote against that kind of government but vote for him who represent "government of the people and by the people, and for the people". Okorocha's campaign team capitalizes on the failings of PDP at the centre and the past PDP regimes in Imo State to clamour for change. This made Okorocha to anchor his campaign slogan or unique selling proposition, "Rescue Mission" in the 2011 governorship elections, and 'industrialization, 'industrialization, factories', factories' in 2015 governorship election. In sum, "negative campaigning or Ad/attack copy is trying to win an advantage by referring to negative aspects of an opponent or policy rather than emphasizing one's own positive attributes or preferred policies". Negative campaigning can come in form of word-of-mouth rhetoric which smears an opponent. It can also be in form of printed words.

a. Contrast Adverts (Advertisement).

The purpose of this category of political advertisement is to make comparison of a candidate's opponent attributes, opinion on issues, policies and personality. Often times due to the way political advertisers and their consultant craft the messages, it usually contains both negative and positive statements about the opponents. Somehow it employs attack ads that criticize both issues as well as the opposition candidates, and often do so by contrasting with their own (Wikipedia 2008), cited by Anyanwu (2012). This type was also effectively used by two heavyweight guber candidates in Imo State.

b. Pure and Clean Purpose Advert.

This kind only adopts clean words or pure languages/statements that either introduces or sells the candidate to the voting public or electorate. Here opponents names are not mentioned neither are they compared with political advertiser" (candidate or political party). The use of poster and jingles are two most used vehicles or media used to deliver such messages to the recipients. The essence of this kind of advertising is to create awareness about the candidate and political party he/she is vying for elective position. This type provides information about the

candidate and persuades various classes of the voting publics to endorse the candidate as their choice in an election. These types were extensively used by both the PDP and APC governorship candidates in Imo State prior to the 2015 gubernatorial election.

c. Image Advert

This type draws from political public relations which try to create favourable image and build reputation for the political candidate or its political party. The purpose is to paint a good picture of a political candidate in the mind of voters. This can be done through mounting publicity/promotional campaign aimed at creating awareness of the achievement of a political aspirant, candidate or government with a view of winning support of the majority of the citizenry or electorate. This kind of political advertising is common in Nigeria political landscape. It can be delivered through newspapers, news magazines, advertorials, special features and documentaries. When politicians or candidates use image advertisement they are trying to sell themselves or personality to the electorate. They provide information about the object or person so that voters can make informed voting decision.

d. Issues Advert

This draws attention of the masses concerning where a candidate or person stands on issues or specific issues of national importance. This type of advert was massively used by Senator Ben Bruce during and after electioneering campaign in 2015 National Assembly election. He drew and continues to draw his constituents' and indeed Nigerians' attention of his stand on reducing poverty, hunger and deprivation in the oil rich Niger Delta. He also made a case for no or reduced gas emission and proposed electronic vehicles or cars as a way of reducing energy crisis in Nigeria. Through his slogan '*Just want to make common sense*' he was able to drive home his point". Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State also adopted this strategy by stating his stand on revamping the educational sector in Imo State. He also made his stand known on agriculture and industrialization. This was meant to educate the masses on 'why' they should vote for him or support his government. His opponent Chief Ihedioha was also vocal on the issue of running a transparent and all-inclusive government. Both candidates used word-of-mouth to make their stand known. Their views were used as excerpts in poster advertisements, newspapers and news magazines headlines.

2.2 Candidate marketing and the use of Unique Selling Proposition (USP): The Case of Imo State Gubernatorial Candidates' Political Advertising.

Scholars have adopted different approaches in defining candidate marketing; this is because of the interdisciplinary and eclectic nature of political marketing. Each scholar tries to reflect its parent discipline in its definition. This study adopts the 'marketing politics definitional approach' widely promoted by Achor (2007, 2011); Achor and Moguluwa (2012); Moguluwa and Achor (2013). According to marketing politics definitional perspective, candidate marketing is a specialized aspect of marketing politics which specifically aims at promoting, selling or marketing a political candidate or aspirant through the integration of marketing, public relations, advertising strategies, etc (Achor and Moguluwa, 2012, Moguluwa and Achor, 2013). It can also be described as "marketing good qualities of a candidate through personality profiling, image/reputation research and management, opinion audit and personality packaging, etc. in order to secure the support of party members or the electorate before, during and after elections or any political mobilization campaign (Achor, 2011; Moguluwa and Achor 2013). One key objective of those who engage in candidate marketing is to secure a cross sectional endorsement of the candidacy of an aspirant/candidate, either at the party or society level. A critical observation of the Nigerian political terrain shows that securing the endorsement of political candidate's candidacy across sectoral divisions is done through various political communication platforms. Political advertising is one of those key communication strategies/ platforms used in achieving the goals of candidate marketing. To effectively utilize political advertising in candidate marketing, the political advertiser (candidate) through its consultants or campaign team needs to engage into opinion poll and image research to discover the image and reputation profile of the candidate. The surveys will help to anchor the candidate's message to a unique selling proposition. The unique selling proposition, according to Ozoh (2013) is an identifiable, highly competitive advantage inherent in one brand and which can be asserted over and above competition. "It represents the offer which a candidate, as a brand in the political market, makes to the electorate as reason for seeking votes at election" (Kaid, 1991).

The unique selling proposition has been described as that which provides the information or message which voters require as justification to vote at an election. Nwosu (2003) supports this idea as he reports that "USP is the fulcrum on which persuasive communication that drives any political advertising revolves. It is the USP that directs the ad message which serves as the major plank for attracting voter attention, arousing voting disposition and facilitating favourable patronage at the specified election. A unique selling point is not a chance event; it is guided on series of opinion polls and other forms of researches conducted by political marketing campaign professionals. In support of this notion, Butter and Collins (1994:19) observed that "the candidate uses marketing professionals to convince the voters to vote for him or her and to buy into his or her vision for the country in question". Newman (1999) shares similar view as he observes that "it takes a good marketing

researcher, media strategist and other stable consultants to effectively market a candidate” .According to Newman (2001) one of the political marketing guidelines that should be adopted during elections which will go a long way to market a candidate is using one central vision to connect to the candidate’s issues and personality. This guideline helped in fine-tuning the unique selling proposition of the political advertising used in marketing the two candidates understudy. The political advertising strategies and indeed the entire political marketing strategies used by Owelle Rochas Okorocha and Chief Emeka Ihedioha were anchored on deepening the economy of the State through provision of factories or industries (industrialization) thereby creating jobs for the teaming unemployed youths. Unlike Rochas USP in the 2011 election, where the message was anchored on “Rescue Mission”. Rochas Okorocha used the Rescue Mission as a leeway to getting endorsement of various elite groups, community leaders, women groups, students, civil society organizations, churches, etc. The Rescue Mission was also a platform to launch his second term bid. Since according to his supporters Imo State was eventually rescued so, he (Rochas) needed to industrialize Imo State and return it to the part of progress. All the advertising campaign of Governor Okorocha reflected the USP – Rescue Mission and industrialization. Perhaps these USPs helped in selling him or candidacy to the electorate. Though, this is subject to the empirical investigation, which this study intends to do.

The other candidate, Chief Ihedioha had a unique selling point anchored on dislodging “familocracy” (a political jargon denoting government by one man for the benefit of his family members, cronies and friends to the exclusion of the generality of the citizenry). Key advertising media used by Ihedioha’s electioneering campaign team anchor on the “familocracy as a canker worm”. Every other message was crafted around that USP. The message of ‘familocracy’ is that the incumbent governor ran or was running a government of familocracy and that he Emeka Ihedioha has come to rescue Imo people from such syndrome. To drive these USPs, both candidates adopted negative campaigning/ advertisement aimed at swaying or moving public opinion to their respective side or direction. The voting public as expected was provided with information that should enable each voter make a choice of the candidate during election or casting of ballot. However, the advertising campaigns (communication) anchored on separate unique selling proposition may or not be expected to influence the attitude, beliefs and values of the electorate, whether they are mobilized for election or any other political activities. Finally, such expected attitudinal changes need not be achieved through physical force or compulsion but through some level of thought process on the part of the receiver, which will sufficiently motivate him or her to willingly want to behave in line with the presentation/logic of the political message (Achor & Moguluwa, 2012, Nwosu and Nkamebe, 2006).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

There are several theoretical constructs that underpin political advertising. The affective component of advertising effect explains how voters assess political candidates, based on the message content; while the cognitive effect of candidate’s identification and association with specific persuasive idea is measured rather than candidate evaluation for election. There is also the media agenda effect on political advertisement, which provides voters with what to think about (McCombs 1981). It offers information designed to create awareness and influence voter behavior. According to Miller (2003) it is the information provided that facilitates public agenda, which makes voters engage in discussions as to which candidate has a better political manifestoes for a possible selection at election (Owuamalam, 2014). Two theories underpin this study and are adopted as the theoretical framework. The first theory is the limited effects theory propounded by Fox and Van sickle (2001) and popularized by other communication and communication scholars (Nwosu, 2001). The “limited effects” theory also assumes that the voting public uses the media for information, but it argues that individuals evaluate that information in the context of what they know from other sources – such as direct contact, friends, opinion leaders etc. these pre-existing and more-or-less independent impressions are believed to constituted powerful influences with which media images must contend in the competition for influencing the voters’ views of the candidates. Under these circumstances, the effects of the mass media are expected to be present, but limited.

The second theory that underpins this study is social judgment theory propounded by Muzafer Sheriff and his Associates in 1961. The theory postulates that individuals interpret messages based on their orientation towards the subject being discussed, and their attitudinal composition. In social judgment theory (SJT), a message is accepted or rejected based on the cognitive map of the receiver and on the receiver’s ego-involvement, particularly if it falls within one’s latitude of acceptance. The SJT believes that individuals have three cognitive compartments where they locate both the received message and formed attitude. These compartments include: (i) Latitude of acceptance (ii) Latitude of rejection, and (iii) Latitude of non-commitment. In the context of our discussion, the latitude of acceptance compares messages that are ordinarily acceptable to the electorate; the latitude of rejection refers to messages that are considered unacceptable, for example when the electorate discover that messages are pure negative propaganda (Achor & Moguluwa, 2012). The latitude of non-commitment describes messages which the electorates are indifferent about, that is they may accept or reject them. The SJT proposes that political marketing communicators/persuaders must carefully

consider the pre-existing attitude the electorate/audience might hold about any political issue before crafting a message” (Achor & Moguluwa, 2012). It is assumed that political messages of the two gubernatorial candidates during/prior to the governorship election were crafted to influence the attitude and beliefs and values of the electorate. The voter is bound to reject them or accept them. The electorate (receiver) after some thought process on the persuasive advertisement should believe or not that the political candidate or political party being advertised is superior to other competing candidates or parties, which will make them continue to support the candidate or decide to vote for the candidate in the election. Below is a theoretical model derived from the theoretical framework linking advertising, Unique selling proposition (USP) and voting pattern/choices (figure II).

The theoretical model linking advertising, unique selling proposition (USP) and voting pattern/choices is distilled from the key message or ideas of the two theories underpinning the study- the limited effects theory and social judgment theory (SJT). In the model, the political advertisers (candidate) through the advertising process initiated by its hired advertising professional develop ad objectives which anchor on single unique selling proposition (USP). The USP is meant to drive the key ad messages that influence voters’ choice or voting pattern; it is carried by different mainstream media and the new (social) media platforms. Instead of believing or taking these media messages about the political candidate A or B *‘hook, line and sinker’*, the voting public and/or the individual voter opt to verify these Ad messages in their cognitive compartments through evaluation process. The voting public evaluates the information in the context of what they know from other sources such as direct contact, friends, opinion leaders, etc thereby limiting the effect of the mainstream media that usually set the agenda for public discussion or provide information which often times are relied on by the public. More importantly, the messages of the media or information concerning the political candidate carried in the mainstream advertising media and social media are reconciled through proper evaluation of the Information gotten from other sources before decision on choices of candidate are made.

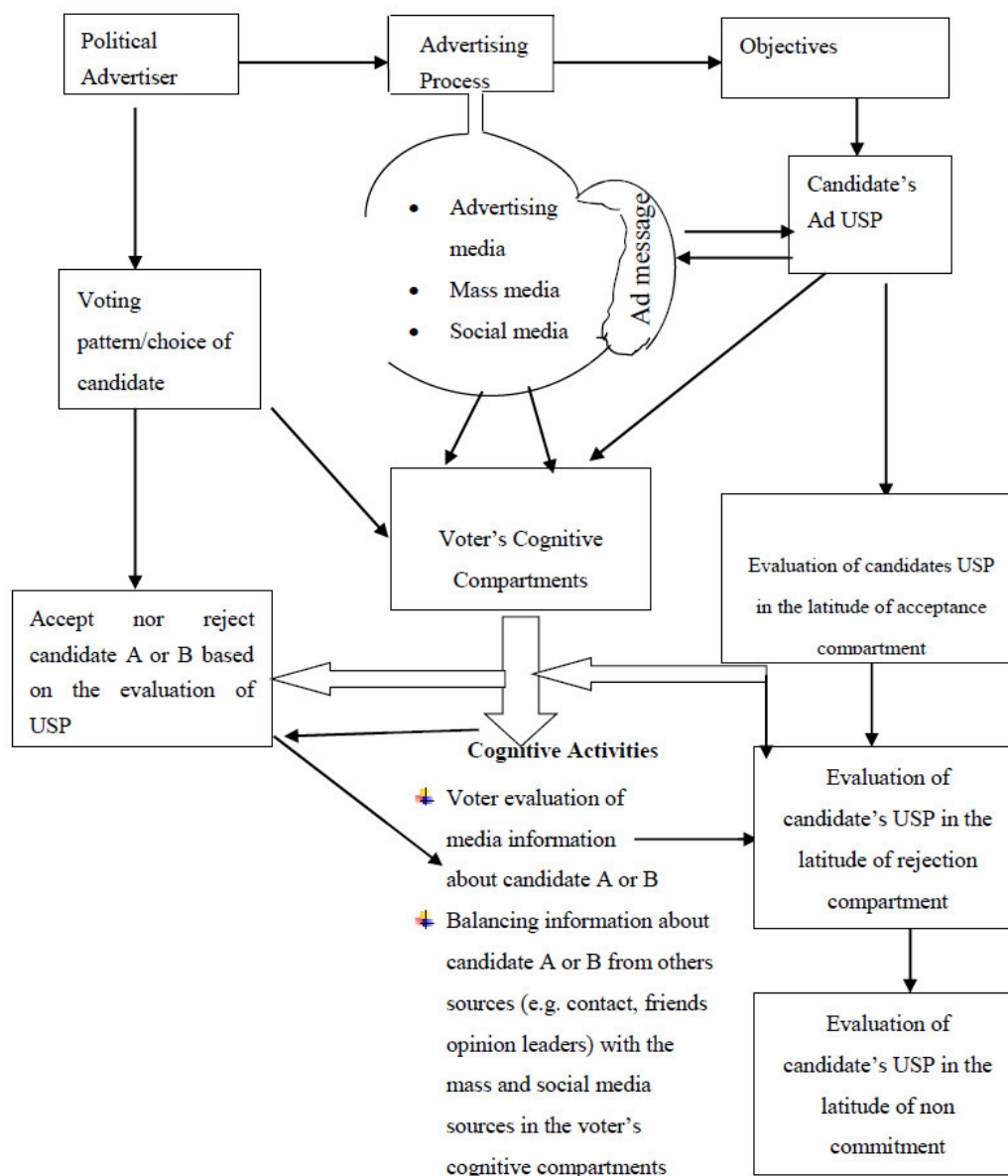


Figure II: Theoretical model Linking advertising, USP and voting pattern/choices.

Source: Researchers' conceptualization from review of literature, 2016

The balancing cum verification of information from the two sources happens in any of the three cognitive compartments of an individual voter or voting public- latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection and latitude of non commitment. If the message of the candidate's USP falls within the latitude of acceptance during thought evaluation process, the voter is bound to vote based on his conviction of the message of the USP. On the contrary, if it falls within the compartment of rejection, the voter rejects the candidate and may not vote him. Also when the USP messages fall within the non commitment compartment, the voter neither rejects nor accepts the candidate as a choice. In reality, this means that the voter may not vote or choose any candidate during elections. The implication is that the voting pattern/choice is strongly linked to USP. The voting public makes voting decisions /and or choices based on their convictions of a candidate's unique selling proposition which is the driver/key persuading element or influencer of any advertisement. The arrows in the diagram depict a link between the USP and voting pattern/choice and to evaluation process in the cognitive compartments-that is choices are made based on evaluation result of each cognitive compartment. If the messages of the USP are convincible, the individual voter will anchor its voting decision on the USP.

2.4 Empirical Studies

There are quite a number of scholarly works that have empirically studied influence or effect of advertising on electorate voting patterns and choice of candidate or political aspirants in an election. In Nigeria few of these

studies exist. In the study of “Nigerian Electorate’s perception of political advertising and election campaign”, Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) conducted in Ekiti State, a substantial proportion of the respondents (52%) were of the opinion that political advertising is not believable and reliable. While a significant proportion believed that political advertising is interesting (88%) and effective on the electorate (64%) and negative advertising should be discouraged (52%). The authors gave reason for this pattern of results. They said that “the main reason for the respondents concluding that political advertising is not believable and reliable may be due to the fact that most of the information used by the contestants or (candidates) sometime is false and deliberately intended to rundown the opposition candidates. The study also revealed that in the last gubernatorial election keenly contested by two dominant parties, the Action Congress AC and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), electorate voted based on personality (36%) followed by those respondents that voted based on party affiliation. The study also revealed that most of the respondents got the information they needed for voting from political campaigns and speeches (44%), especially those who are party loyalist and some electorates who are undecided but are looking for information that would enable them make a rightful political choice. However, the study revealed that some of the advertising messages (36%) contained less of what they needed.

A similar study by Udeze and Akpan (2013) showed that all the respondents (120 or 100%) sampled were exposed to political advertising in the 2011 guber national election in Imo State. 50% of the respondents were always exposed to political advertising during the 2011 governorship election while a little above 33% were often exposed to such political advertising. Out of the 120 respondents, only 16.7% were rarely exposed to political advertising. The study also indicated that (100%) of the respondents mainly access political advertising messages through the electronic media, radio in particular. This is in contrast to the Olujide et al (2011) findings that most respondents got the message/information they needed for voting from political campaigns and speeches (44%). Udeze and Akpan’s research findings corroborates the assertion by scholars that in Africa, radio is the major mass medium because it overcomes the triple barrier of illiteracy, language and distances (Nwosu 2003; 2007 Osuji 2001).

The study also revealed that for political advertising to influence the electorate the message must be accepted as credible. The findings indicate that most of the respondents (58%) believed the messages contain in the political advertisements during the governorship election in 2011 Imo State gubernatorial election. They believed the political messages because of the perceived credibility of the candidates. This finding is in sharp contrast to Olujide et al (2011) findings where over 52% respondents did not believe or found the political advertisement (message) unreliable. Another study by Owuamalam (2014) sampled opinion of 377 respondents to ascertain their level of perception of the television commercials (advertisement) prior to 2015 presidential hopefuls or candidates. The study also evaluated voters’ disposition to select either Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP or the Muhammadu Buhari of the APC, in the March, 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. It was found that voter disposition and behavior were based on how presented political messages related to voter expectation (66%); that the choice of a unique selling proposition in political advertisements is not a major compelling force for candidate selection at election (36.87%). Less than two-fifths or 36.87% were disposed to selecting a candidate based on the presented USP. The study also confirms that voters were able to differentiate Jonathan’s proposal from that of Buhari in their political advertisements ($X_{cal} (53.00) > x_{tab} (5.991)$). In the study too, no significant relationship exists between the presented proposals and voter propensity for candidate selection ($X_{cal} = 3.01 < x_{tab} (5.991)$).

Some other studies have evaluated the impact of the use of new media in political advertisement on the electorate. A study conducted in Nigeria by Asemah and Edegoh (2012) investigated the new media and political advertising in Nigeria. Findings show that new media is an important tool for carrying political advertisement ($x_m = 3.7$) but do not have positive impact on the electorate because majority of them do not have access to them (4.1). The study also reveals that political advertisement through the new media that attack the opposing candidates and parties usually have more impact on the electorate ($x_m = 2.0$). Unfortunately this study did not say anything on the effect of the new media on the choice candidates by the electorate. Other similar studies have extensively investigated the use of new media in modern political campaign and political marketing. One of these studies revealed that the success of the Obama campaign and his being elected in 2008 and 2012 was as a result of near perfect use of social media. Miller (2013) discovered that over 86% of the respondents sampled to get their opinion on this answered in the affirmative. Also Miller’s study revealed that the success of the Obama campaign and his utilization of new media technology have posed new conundrums (over 78% of the respondents attested to this fact).

A study by Towner and Duho (2012) assessed new media and political marketing in the United States. The study revealed that over 75% of the respondents agreed that Obama use of new media such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and other online video sharing sites in relaying his political message had great impact on them. These media platforms provided them with on the spot information that influenced their choice of candidate and they eventually cast their vote for him in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. Similar

findings was reported by Kaid (2012) who studied changes in the political marketing arena but discovered that the use of new media channels in delivering political advertisement has been effective. This is because over 60 percent of the electorate was influenced through the messages delivered in the new media platforms.

3. Methodology

Descriptive research design was adopted and approached through survey. This method was considered appropriate for the study given that it focuses on people's vital facts, motivation and behavior. Hence, it helped in discovering interrelations of sociological and psychological variables that underpin the study. It was also used in the study because of its orientation towards the determination of a given phenomena. The population of the study comprised all the eligible registered voters in the 2014 -2015 Independent National Electoral Commission's Voters Register in the three senatorial zones of Imo State. The figures for the registered voters stood as follows: Owerri Zone 750,855; Orlu Zone 681, 983; and Okigwe Zone 294, 529 respectively. Total population is 1727367(INEC, 2015). In each senatorial zone, two local governments and two villages or towns were selected. The two local governments were picked through simple random sampling technique which gave each local government from each senatorial zone equal chance of being selected. The reason for choosing this area of study is to have a fair representation of all the senatorial zones in Imo State thereby eliminating subjectivity. For Owerri Senatorial Zone, Ngor Okpala and Aboh Mbaize local governments were selected (Towns or villages selected from Ngor Okpala LGA are Umuohiagu and Umuowa, while that of Aboh Mbaize include Mbutu and Enyogugu). For Okigwe Senatorial zone, Obowu (Auutu & Alike) and Isiala Mbano local governments (Amaraku & Anara) were selected. In Orlu Senatorial Zone, Orlu (Umuna and Amaifeke villages) and Oru East local governments (Mgbidi and Awomama villages) were selected. Taro Yamane's (1965) sample size determination model for finite population was used to select a sample of 400. The formula is given thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Non probability sampling technique (purposive sampling technique) was used to assign quota to each of the senatorial zones. The population of each senatorial zone divide by overall population of the study multiplied by the sample size gives each stratum (senatorial zone) the number of instrument (questionnaire) deplored. The purposive sampling technique was also used to select sample or respondents from the selected villages whom the researchers thought were literate enough to understand and interpret questions in the research instrument. This was intentionally done to avoid sampling illiterates that may not understand the messages of the political adverts used by the political candidates. Research instrument used was 22-itemed structured questionnaire with two sections. Section 'A' contained demographics of respondents while section 'B' contained questions that specifically addressed issues/opinions of respondents on political advertising and its effect on voters' choice of candidate in an election. The questions were worded in Likert five-point scale of strongly disagree (1), to strongly agree (5). The reliability analysis indicates that the variables had a Cronbach Alpha of 0.837 or (0.84) which is an acceptable measure. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages were used in presentation and data analysis. Further analysis was done using the mean. A cut off mark was determined by finding the mean of the nominal values assigned to options in the Likert scale. For purpose of decision making 3.05 and above was accepted as agree while values below 3.05 was taken as rejected or not accepted. Hypotheses one and four were tested with the aid of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), while hypotheses two and three were tested with simple two-stage least square analysis. Hypothesis five was tested with the Kendall's W chi-square Test for related samples.

6. Data Analysis and Results

Of 400 copies of questionnaire(Owerri zone 174; Orlu zone 158; Okigwe zone 68), 332 copies were completed and returned accounting for 83 percent response rate and 68(17%) mortality rate (not returned). The analysis of the demographic data of the respondents showed that more than two-third or 204 (61.4%) respondents were male while 128 representing 38.6 percent were female. Distribution of educational qualification showed that a total of 151 or 45.5 percent respondents are first degree/HND holders; 81 (24.4%) hold masters degree, 29(8.7%) possessed Diploma or its equivalent while an insignificant 18 or 5.4 percent hold doctorate degree. 32 or 9.6 percent have SSCE/WASCE/GCE or their equivalents, while 21 representing 6.3 percent hold postgraduate Diploma. Respondents' distribution on occupation showed that out of 332 respondents, 122(37%) were civil servants; 78(23.5%) were students, 43 or 12.9 percent engage in teaching; 34(10.2%) were traders/business people. 31 or 9.3 percent work as professionals while 24 or 7.2 work as artisans.

Table1 . Mean responses on the relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate (n= 332)

S/N	Statements	SA (5)	A (4)	UN (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total responses	Mean score
1	Your exposure to a Candidate's advertising messages via the mass media influenced you as your choice	120 600	28 112	116 348	68 136	0 0	1196	3.60
2	Your exposure to a candidate's advertising messages via different social media platforms influenced you to choose him as your candidate	125 625	57 228	102 306	46 92	2 2	1253	3.77
	Grand Mean							3.68

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Note: SA= strongly agree, A= Agree, UN= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= strongly disagree

Table 1 addresses research question 1 which asked: to what extent does voters' exposure to political advertising message relates to their choice of candidate? The table shows that questions 1 and 2 with mean scores of 3.60 and 3.77 were above the weighted average of 3.05. The grand mean of 3.68 shows that there is a strong evidence of a significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate. This conclusion is buttressed by the frequency and percentage of response to each of the statements. For question 1, 148(44.6%) answered in the affirmative (strongly agree and agree), 68(20.5%) answered in the negative (disagree and disagree) while 116(34.9%) neither answered agree nor disagree.

Table 2 Mean responses on the relationship between voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber election in Imo State and influenced by unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising campaign (n= 332)

S/N	Questions	SA (5)	A (4)	UN (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total resps	Mean score
3	Did you choose Rochas as your candidate because of the influence his campaign slogan of industrialization and consolidation on gains of his rescue mission had on you?	133 665	63 252	78 234	46 92	12 12	1255	3.78
4	Did you choose Ihedioha as your candidate because of the influence his campaign slogan of rescuing Imo State from the bondage of familocracy had on you?	47 235	122 488	77 231	47 94	39 39	1087	3.27
5	So does it mean that you liked your candidate's campaign slogan as it impacted on you?	49 245	57 228	137 411	68 136	21 21	1041	3.14
	Grand Mean							3.39

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 2 shows that questions 3, 4 and 5 with mean scores of 3.78, 3.27 and 3.14 were above the weighted average of 3.05. The grand mean of 3.39 shows a strong relationship between voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 gubernatorial election in Imo State and unique selling proposition of a candidate's political advertising campaign. This conclusion is supported by the number or percentage of respondents that answered in the affirmative 196 (59%) and in the negative (58 or 17.4%) to question 3. Similar pattern of responses were also recorded in question 4 (i.e. 169 or 50.9% affirmative responses), and (i.e. 86 or 25.9% negative responses) respectively.

Table 3 Mean values on decision to vote for a candidate is attributed to different styles/ appeals through which political advertising messages were presented & disseminated to the recipients (n=332).

S/N	Questions	SA (5)	A (4)	UN (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total resps.	Mean score
6	Your decision to vote for the candidate of your choice can be attributed to the razzmatazz used in the message delivery	59 295	87 348	120 360	47 94	19 19	1116	3.36
7	The emotional appeal style of the message delivery a candidate's advertising also influenced your decision to vote the candidate of your choice	61 305	91 364	124 372	33 66	23 23	1130	3.4
8	Do you also agree that your decision to vote the candidate of your choice was influenced by the style of language used in delivering the political advertising messages?	41 205	133 532	103 309	41 82	14 14	1142	3.44
	Grand Mean							3.4

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Note: SA= strongly agree, A= Agree, UN= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= strongly disagree

Table 3 shows that questions 6, 7 and 8 with mean scores of 3.36, 3.4 and 3.44 were above the weighted average cutoff point of 3.05 for decision making. The grand mean of 3.4 shows a strong evidence that voters'

decision to vote is attributed to different styles/appeals through which candidate's political advertising messages were presented and disseminated to the recipients. The frequencies and percentage values of respondents' affirmative and negative responses buttressed the above decision.

Table 4. Mean responses on the difference in message content and the way they are delivered in different advertising media & their impact on voter's choice of candidate

S/N	Questions	SA (5)	A (4)	UN (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total resps.	Mean score
9	Does the difference in message content crafted in different languages and delivered in different advertising media affect your choice of candidate?	78 390	79 316	121 363	32 64	22 22	1155	3.48
10	Does the difference in message content as expressed in comparison of contending candidates and delivered in different advertising media affected your choice of candidate?	152 760	93 372	64 192	2 4	21 21	1349	4.06
11	Does the difference in message content of a candidate's advertising delivered in different media platforms believable to affect your choice of candidate?	74 370	20 80	198 594	30 60	10 10	1114	3.36
	Grand Mean							3.63

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Note: SA= strongly agree, A= Agree, UN= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= strongly disagree

Table 4 shows that questions 9, 10 and 11 with mean scores of 3.48, 4.06 and 3.36 were above the weighted mean of 3.05. The grand mean of 3.63 shows strong evidence that the difference in message content and the way they are delivered in different advertising media had impact on voters' choice of candidate. The frequencies and percentage values of respondents' affirmative and negative responses to the questions buttresses the above decision.

Table 5 Mean responses on presentation of facts in different opponent's political advertising campaigns and it effect on voters' choice of candidate

S/N	Questions	SA (5)	A (4)	UN (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total resps.	Mean score
12	If you were presented with more believable fact by opponent's pure political ad, would you have changed your choice of candidate?	100 500	58 232	148 444	21 42	5 5	1223	3.7
13	If an opponent through its attack advert exposes believable facts about your chosen candidate, would you have changed him as your choice?	170 850	35 140	55 165	30 60	42 42	1257	3.8
14	Does believability of political ad inform your choice of a candidate?	61 305	86 344	84 252	64 128	37 37	1066	3.21
	Grand Mean							3.6

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 5 shows that questions 12, 13 and 14 with mean scores of 3.7, 3.8 and 3.21 were above the weighted mean of 3.05. The grand mean of 3.6 shows strong evidence that the presentation of facts in different opponent's political advertising campaigns had strong effect on voters' choice of candidate. The frequencies and percentage values of respondents' affirmative and negative responses to the questions supports the above decision.

6. Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses one and four were tested with the aid of one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), while hypotheses two and three were tested with simple two-stage least square analysis. Hypothesis five was tested with the Kendall's W chi-square Test for related samples.

Test of Hypothesis one

HO: There is no significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and Voters' choice of candidate

Hi: There is significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate.

Table 6 Computation of Statistical variables on the First Hypothesis from table 4.1.3

S/N	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2
	120	14400	28	784	116	13456	68	4624	0	0
	125	15625	57	3249	102	10404	46	2116	2	4
Total	245	30025	85	4033	218	23860	114	6740	2	4

Source: Survey Data, 2016 Note values adapted from table 1

Table 7 Computation of Analysis of Variance on the Relationship between voters' Exposure and Voters' Choice of Candidate

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Sum of Squares	Calculated F-Value	Table critical F- value	Decision
Between Group	19797.4	4	4949.35	32	6.21	Ho: Rejected
Within Group	773	5	154.6			
Total	20570.4	9				

Source: Statistical computation from Table 6

Decision

Table 7 shows that calculated F-Value of 32.01 resulted from the relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 gubernatorial election in Imo State. This F-Value is significant since it is greater than the critical F-Value of 6.21 given 4/5 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. This shows that there is significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 gubernatorial election in Imo State.

Test of Hypothesis two

HO: Voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State was not significantly influenced by the unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising campaign.

Hi : Voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State was significantly influenced by the unique selling proposition of candidates' political advertising.

Test-statistics for hypothesis two is two-stage Least Squares Analysis **(Regression Analysis)**

Test model:

$$VCC = \alpha + USP + \beta e_i \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n)$$

Where VCC= Voters Choice of Candidate, α = constant, USP=Unique selling proposition, β = Beta coefficient, e= Error term, i = number of observation

Table 8.1 Model Description

	Type of Variable
Equation 1 VAR00005	Dependent
VAR00003	Predictor
VAR00004	Instrumental

$$MOD_1 \text{ VCC} = \alpha + USP + \beta e_i \quad (i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n)$$

Table 8.2 Model Summary for Hypothesis two

Equation 1	Multiple R	.231
	R Square	.053
	Adjusted R Square	.050
	Std. Error of the Estimate	1.101

Table 8.3

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Equation 1 Regression	22.446	1	22.446	18.520	.000
Residual	399.946	330	1.212		
Total	422.392	331			

Table 8.4 Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
Equation 1	(Constant)	1.196	.455		2.631	.009
	VAR00003	.513	.119	.567	4.304	.000

Source: Computation of field data using SPSS
F-value= 18.520 Beta coefficient (β) = 1.196, t-statistics = 2.631, level of significance= 0.009

Decision Rule

The ANOVA table 8.3 shows that calculated F-Value of 18.520 resulted from Voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State as influenced by the unique selling proposition of candidates' political advertising. This F-Value is significant since it is greater than the critical F-Value of 6.21 given 4/5 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Also since the Beta coefficient (β =1.196, $p < 0.05$) and associated t-statistics = 2.631 is significant at 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. This shows that voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State was significantly influenced by the unique selling proposition of candidates' political advertising.

Test of Hypothesis three

HO: Voters' informed voting decision is not significantly attributed to different message delivery patterns of political advertising.

HI: Voters' informed voting decision is significantly attributed to different message delivery patterns of political advertising.

Test-statistics for hypothesis three is two-stage Least Squares Analysis (Regression Analysis)

Table 9.1a Model Description

	Type of Variable
Equation 1	VAR00010 VAR00006 VAR00007 VAR00008
	Dependent predictor instrumental Predictor Instrumental

MOD_3 VIVD = α + DMDP + β ei (i = 1, 2, 3...n)

Table 9.1b Model Summary for hypothesis three

Equation 1	Multiple R	.064
	R Square	.004
	Adjusted R Square	-.002
	Std. Error of the Estimate	4.074

Table 9.1c ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Equation 1	Regression	22.351	2	11.175	.673	.511
	Residual	5461.865	329	16.601		
	Total	5484.215	331			

Table 9.1d

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
Equation 1	(Constant)	-8.564	10.940		-.783	.434
	VAR00006	.128	.235	.127	.546	.585
	VAR00007	3.583	3.090	3.558	1.159	.247

Source: SPSS computation of descriptive data for hypothesis 3

Decision Rule

The ANOVA table 4.1.2 shows that calculated F-Value of .673.520 resulted from voters' informed voting decision attributed to different styles by which political advertising messages were presented/disseminated. This F-Value is significant since it is greater than the .511 calculated significance at 2 of freedom at .511 level of significance. Also since the Beta coefficient (β) = -8.564, and associated t-statistics = -783 is significant at .434, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted. This shows that voters' informed voting decision is significantly attributed to different styles by which political advertising messages were presented/disseminated.

Test of Hypothesis four

HO: The difference in message content of some of political advertising and the way they are relayed in different advertising media does not significantly affect voters' choice of candidate in an election

HI: The difference in message content of some of political advertising and the way they are relayed in different advertising media significantly affected voters' choice of candidate in an election

Table 10 Computation of Statistical variables on the First Hypothesis from table 4.1.6

N/S	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2	X	X2
9	78	6084	79	6241	121	14641	32	1024	22	484
10	152	23104	93	8649	64	4096	2	4	21	441
11	74	5476	20	400	198	39204	30	900	10	100
Total	304	34664	192	15290	383	57941	64	1928	93	1025

Source: Survey Data, 2015 Note values adapted from table 4

Table11 Computation of Analysis of Variance on the Relationship between voters' Exposure and Voters' Choice of Candidate

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Sum of Squares	Calculated F- Value	Table critical F- value	Decision
Between Group	24684.8	4	6171.2	4.22	6.21	Ho: Accepted
Within Group	14610.1	10	1461.01			
Total	39294.9	14				

Source: Statistical computation from Table 4

Decision

Table 4.2.6 shows that calculated F-Value of 4.22 resulted from difference in message content of some of political advertising and the way they are relayed in different advertising media and their affect voters' choice of candidate in an election. This F-Value is not significant since it is less than the critical F-Value of 6.21 given 4/10 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted while the alternative is rejected. This shows that the difference in message content of some of political advertising and the way they are relayed in different advertising media does not significantly affect voters' choice of candidate in an election

Test of Hypothesis Five

Ho: Voters' choice of candidate for an election does not significantly change when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising messages

HI: Voters' choice of candidate for an election significantly change when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising messages

Test- statistics is Kendall's W chi-square Test for related samples

Kendall's W Test

Table 5.1 Ranks

	Mean Rank
VAR00012	1.97
VAR00013	2.23
VAR00014	1.79

Test Statistics

N	332
Kendall's W ^a	.068
Chi-Square	44.935
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

Decision Rule

The Kendall's coefficient of concordance is .068 and significant at .000 asymptotic level of significance while chi-square calX2 (44.935) is greater than critical X2 value of 15.507 at $df=8, 0.05$, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative is accepted which states that Voters' choice of candidate for an election significantly change when presented with more believable facts by opponent's advertising messages.

Discussion of Findings

This study was prompted by the desire to examine the effect of a litany of political advertising that rent the air prior to and during 2015 governorship elections in Nigeria and Imo State in particular on voters' choice of candidate and participation in political processes. The result showed that there is a strong evidence of a significant relationship between voters' exposure to political advertising and voters' choice of candidate. This is strongly supported by the result of Analysis of Variance. The calculated F-value of 32.01 is significant since it is greater than the critical F-value of 6.21 given 4/5 degree of freedom at 0.05% level of significance. This is also buttressed by the percentage of voters that answered in agreement to statements in table 4.2.3. The study by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2011) corroborates the findings of this study as they found out that political advertising is having significant effect on the electorate. However, in reality, this may not really be the case because there are some party loyalists or individuals who vote according to party name/ affiliation rather than a candidate.

Hypothesis two showed that voters' choice of candidate in the 2015 guber elections in Imo State was significantly influenced by the unique selling proposition of candidate's political advertising. The grand mean of 3.7 is above 3.05 significant level. Beta coefficient of 1.196 and its associated t-statistic of 2.631 is significant at 0.05% level of acceptance. Hence the p-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 significant level of acceptance. This finding differs from Owuamalam's (2014) finding that the choice of unique selling proposition in political advertising is not a compelling force to candidate selection at election. Hence, he posited that "there is no significant relationship between the selected proposal and voter propensity to select a candidate at election. However, the dissimilarity in the findings of Owuamalam and this present study can be attributed to different political settings, and level of political/ voters' awareness. Owuamalam's study setting anchored on Nigeria as super system while this study focuses on Imo State, which is a microcosm of Nigerian State. Again, Imo State political landscape prior to the 2015 gubernatorial election was tense due to sudden defection of the incumbent governor, Owele Rochas to All Progressives Congress. The electorate was divided along political propaganda used by political candidates to sway public opinion to their sides. Both the slogan of consolidation on the gains of 'Rescue Mission' and 'Industrialization' as used by Rochas, and dislodgment of Imo State from familocracy of Ihedioha's campaign's USP, all paid off as some voters were influenced by these USPs Literature on orthodox advertising and integrated marketing communication buttress the notion that unique selling proposition crafted in advertisement influences consumer opinion and works as a catalyst for behavioural change. The findings reinforce the conceptual framework and align it with the affective component of advertising effect, which explains how voters assess political candidate based on the message content. It also aligns with the cognitive effect of candidate's identification and association with specific persuasive idea.

Hypothesis three showed that voters' informed voting decision was significantly attributed to different styles by which political advertising message were presented. Literature supports this line of finding. Study by McNeil and Jackson (2011) reveals that the beauty of advertising campaign is in its delivery in different formats, language, and vehicles. The razzmatazz, emotional appeals and language styles/ techniques used in message delivery of some of the candidate's political advertising helped in determining voter's choice of candidate in an election. Hypothesis four revealed that the difference in message content of some political advertising and the way they were relayed in different advertising media did not significantly affect voters' choice of candidate in that election. This finding supports the limited effect theory which assumes that the voter uses the media for information, but the delivery pattern of some political messages and different ways they are delivered do not really make any significant impact on voters' choice. Rather, it was the message content that made the most

appeal or impact on voters' choice of candidate. The fifth hypothesis revealed that voters' choice of candidate for an election significantly changed when presented with more believable facts by an opponent's advertising message. This finding buttresses the limited effect theory and argues that individuals evaluate information in the context of what they know from other sources- such as direct contact, friends and pre-existing independent impressions are believable to constitute powerful influences. When an opponent's political message aligns with voter's held opinion concerning a candidate, the voter may tend to change its support or even remain apolitical. This finding also supports the Social Judgment Theory (SJT) that held that when voter's evaluations of a candidate is reinforced by its latitude of rejection or non commitment, the voter is bound to withdraw its support or remain uncommitted.

7. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the potency of political advertising in democratic processes. Political advertising remains a key political communication tool used in marketing political products (political candidates, political party, government programmes, etc) to the electorate or the citizenry. Its effect on voters' choice of candidate, in an election, anchor on agglomeration of factors that transcend mere rhetoric and razzmatazz. Its affective component of impact squarely rest on the message content. It is the content of the advertising message rather than delivery techniques that recipients evaluates and make informed voting decision or take part in other political processes. Conceptually, political advertising draws from related disciplines and harnesses the knowledge gained from these other disciplines in crafting persuasive messages that influence attitude, behaviours and opinion of the target audiences. From the findings of the study, the unique selling proposition (USP) encapsulates the idea and message the political advertiser wants to sell to the target publics. For example, the two gubernatorial candidates used in this study were able to utilize the USPs to sell their personality, party blueprint and at the same time made a strong case for Imo electorate on the reasons why they should vote for their choice of candidate at the 2015 polls.

Governor Rochas anchored his USP on the consolidation of the gains made on the 'Rescue Mission' agenda and industrialization of Imo State, while his opponent, chief Ihedioha crafted his USP along a single message of rescuing Imo People from what he called Familocracy(that is a coinage depicting government of one man for his benefit, his family, relatives, cronies and friends). Both Rochas' and Ihedioha's USPs impacted voters' decision in the election. The USPs provided platform on which voters evaluated the candidates' messages and credibility. The result of their evaluations were either reinforced or rubbished by the content of a candidate's political advertising. Hence, when believable facts about a candidate is presented in an opponent's advertising message, voter choice of candidate had to change, with exception of diehard part loyalists and those who voted based on party affiliation and ideology. The central message of this study, therefore, is that political advertising is geared towards influencing behaviours, attitudes and beliefs. When behaviours, attitudes and beliefs are positively influenced, one can say that political advertising in all ramifications have made significant impact on the people or electoral publics.

8 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended as follows:

Political advertisers particularly candidates should engage the services of experts to undertake their political advertising campaigns for better results. Candidates should deemphasize name calling and attack ad but adopt pure and comparative advertising technique in crafting advertising messages. Voters should always evaluate the content of advertising message and match the results with the observable character of candidates to be able to ascertain whether the candidates fit into their choice criteria. Political advertisers, e.g. candidates should also develop their unique selling points on issues of fact but not on trivia.

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